

Such Great Heights

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Being gay can present many problems in relation to defining who you are and standing up to admit that you are part of a minority. There are of course the issues of understanding yourself and feeling part of a wider community whilst developing independently. Some of us may feel disassociated with certain factions of the gay community; sometimes we feel totally outside of 'what it is to be gay'. However, perhaps one of the toughest things to grasp and grapple with is being attracted to somebody and then being able to cope with that. Of course attraction is universal and transcends sexuality; however for young gay people - with so much occupying their thoughts anyway - the idea of committing to another person can be daunting.

So, when there is that realisation that you in fact like somebody enough to want to make that move, how do you set about it? A young gay person who's experiencing problems in working out how they fit into society, who then suddenly develops feelings for somebody of the same sex, may feel that it confirms everything and makes sexuality that bit more concrete. However, the difference between heterosexual and homosexual attraction is that if you're gay you can of course be attracted to somebody of the same sex and yet they may not be within reach. Yes, there is the issue of the straight boy crush! So if being gay can be at times so difficult, why do we aim our affections at a man who is totally unobtainable? Firstly, do we consciously set our sights on turning a straight man gay, or do we simply find ourselves falling for somebody regardless of their sexuality? Of course it can be hard to define or restrict affection simply because a person may not be easily obtainable. However, it is a sad fact that if a boy is straight then he isn't going to be turned by a gay man giving him the eye in a bar or on the street. Attraction is totally uncontrollable. For all the times you may have defined your "type" to your friends, I am sure that almost a week later somebody unexpected may have caught your eye. Obviously, if attraction was formulaic then the world would be a dull place; it is the unpredictability of affection that makes it tough to not fall for the most unrealistic of men. There is something else to consider when it comes to having the hots for someone who's straight; how much of your attraction to him is based upon lust? Ultimately we are all, perhaps, subconsciously aware that it is unlikely we can turn a straight man gay. So perhaps we're merely attracted to the challenge, and are simply trying to prove our worth as gay men! There should be a remedy to this; a straight man, if aware of a gay man's attentions will usually put everything in order by rejecting (in whatever way) the advances. However, what if this does not happen, what if the straight man is vague in his reproach? Where is the gay man left emotionally?

To be attracted to a straight man is not wrong or uncommon, and it is merely a fact of being attracted to the same sex. Attraction is not clever enough to pick up on somebody's sexuality before a feeling is sparked. However, what we do all possess is sense - and the ability to discredit those who are unobtainable. Perhaps there is something right about the "challenge" of turning a straight man. However, are you ever ready for the fallout, or prepared for the dangerous possibility of an angry opposition to your advances? I do know those who have expressed their feelings for straight men who may have been good friends or mere acquaintances, and I have witnessed very different reactions to such an admission. For some straight men, the attention is the highest compliment, and their commitment to their sexuality allows them to simply state their heterosexuality and maintain a close friendship with their gay admirer. On the opposing side is the straight man who is threatened by the admiration, and there is the chance that the gay man although honest, suffers the consequences and puts himself in a dangerous position both physically and emotionally. Moreover, there is the final possibility; for in the case of a straight man who does not immediately reject the advances - for whatever reason - an element of hope lies on the horizon for the gay man. This is arguably the worse scenario for it simply adds more fuel to the challenge of turning the straight man gay. In being vague, the straight man is implying that he is considering the offer. Who is at fault here? Perhaps it is the straight man for potentially leading the gay man on, but perhaps blame should be assigned to the gay man for not putting a stop to any charade at the earliest opportunity. Considering the perspective of the gay man, it is potentially damaging to focus attention on someone who is invariably going to disappoint. Especially for young gay people, when it can be confusing enough to accept yourself, it is potentially damaging to hope for the impossible. Even in the best case scenario, where a seemingly straight man may enter into a relationship with a gay man, there are plenty of issues to resolve, and should this relationship involve two younger gay men who need to develop personally before they can connect fully with another person, it is perhaps best to encourage boundaries when looking at a man across the street or in the park. Unfortunately men are always around, and even if they look like the Adonis ideal of Classical Greece, if they aren't gay then keep away!